

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-27 (Canceled).

28. (Currently Amended) A storage unit for storing elongated products comprising at least two flexible members, wherein each of said at least two flexible members are equipped with supports having at least one product supporting surface for said products, ~~extending and moving~~ are constructed and arranged to extend and move along respective parallel paths and are defined by a plurality of driving wheels, wherein:

- said supports project laterally from ~~a corresponding one flexible member~~ each of said at least two flexible members; and

- in each of said paths in proximity to at least one driving wheel of said plurality of driving wheels a transfer member is ~~positioned, which receives~~ present for receiving said products from the supports located on a first branch of ~~the corresponding one~~ each of said at least two flexible member members at a point upstream of said at least one driving wheel and ~~transfers~~ for transferring the products from the supports on the first branch to the supports located on ~~the~~ a second branch of ~~said~~ a corresponding one

of each of said at least two flexible member members  
downstream of said at least one driving wheel with respect  
to a direction of feed of the flexible members along the  
respective parallel paths, so that the products are moved  
from the first branch to the second branch of a common  
flexible member following ~~follow~~ a trajectory that by-passes  
said at least one driving wheel.

29. (Previously Presented) Storage unit as claimed in  
claim 28, wherein said at least two flexible members are  
continuous and extend along closed paths.

30. (Currently Amended) ~~Storage unit as claimed in~~  
~~claim 28 or 29,~~ A storage unit for storing elongated  
products comprising at least two flexible members, wherein  
each of said at least two flexible members are equipped with  
supports having at least one product supporting surface for  
said products, are constructed and arranged to extend and  
move along respective parallel paths and are defined by a  
plurality of driving wheels, wherein:

- said supports project laterally from each of said at  
least two flexible members; and

- in each of said paths in proximity to at least one  
driving wheel of said plurality of driving wheels a transfer  
member is present for receiving said products from the

supports located on a first branch of one of said at least two flexible members at a point upstream of said at least one driving wheel and for transferring the products to the supports located on a second branch of said one of said at least two flexible members downstream of said at least one driving wheel with respect to a direction of feed of the flexible members along the respective parallel paths, so that the products follow a trajectory that by-passes said at least one driving wheel, and

wherein each of said supports has two opposed ~~resting~~ product supporting surfaces to receive and hold said products on one or other of two sides of each of said supports.

31. (Previously Presented) Storage unit as claimed in claim 28, wherein each of said supports projects from a same side of a respective one of said flexible members.

32. (Currently Amended) Storage unit as claimed in claim 28, wherein said supports extend at least partially approximately according to a plane parallel to a plane on which ~~the corresponding one of said at least two flexible member~~ members lies.

33. (Currently Amended) Storage unit as claimed in claim 32, wherein said supports project from the

~~corresponding one of said at least two flexible member~~  
~~members~~ in a direction so that the supports are oriented radially towards an axle of the at least one driving wheel with which said transfer member is associated.

34. (Currently Amended) ~~Storage unit as claimed in claim 28,~~ A storage unit for storing elongated products comprising at least two flexible members, wherein each of said at least two flexible members are equipped with supports having at least one product supporting surface for said products, are constructed and arranged to extend and move along respective parallel paths and are defined by a plurality of driving wheels, wherein:

- said supports project laterally from each of said at least two flexible members; and

- in each of said paths in proximity to at least one driving wheel of said plurality of driving wheels a transfer member is present for receiving said products from the supports located on a first branch of one of said at least two flexible members at a point upstream of said at least one driving wheel and for transferring the products to the supports located on a second branch of said one of said at least two flexible members downstream of said at least one driving wheel with respect to a direction of feed of the

flexible members along the respective parallel paths, so that the products follow a trajectory that by-passes said at least one driving wheel, and

wherein said transfer member comprises a transfer surface intersecting a trajectory of the supports carried by the first branch upstream and the second branch downstream of said at least one driving wheel, and inclined from a top thereof downwards and from the first branch upstream towards the second branch downstream to cause transfer of said products by gravity, said paths extending along planes that lie substantially vertically.

35. (Previously Presented) Storage unit as claimed claim 29, wherein each of said closed paths is defined by at least a first series and a second series of driving wheels with fixed axle, and by a first series and a second series of driving wheels with moving axle carried by a moving unit between the first series and the second series of driving wheels with fixed axle, and wherein a respective transfer member carried by said moving unit is associated with each of said driving wheels of said first series of driving wheels with moving axis.

36. (Currently Amended) Storage unit as claimed in claim 35, wherein each transfer member transfers the

6468/USSN 10/520,895  
Group Art Unit 3651

products from ~~one~~ the first branch to the ~~other~~ second branch of the ~~corresponding~~ one of said at least two flexible ~~member~~ members, tangent to the driving wheels with moving axle with which said transfer member is associated.

37. (Currently Amended) Storage unit as claimed in claim 35, wherein the supports are mounted projectingly on the ~~corresponding~~ one of said at least two flexible ~~member~~ members so that in an area where the ~~corresponding~~ one of said at least two flexible ~~member~~ members is driven around the driving wheels with moving axle the supports are oriented radially towards the moving axle of said driving wheels.

38. (Currently Amended) ~~Storage unit as claimed in claim 35~~ A storage unit for storing elongated products comprising at least two flexible members, wherein each of said at least two flexible members are equipped with supports having at least one product supporting surface for said products, are constructed and arranged to extend and move along respective parallel paths and are defined by a plurality of driving wheels, wherein:

- said supports project laterally from each of said at least two flexible members; and

- in each of said paths in proximity to at least one driving wheel of said plurality of driving wheels a transfer member is present for receiving said products from the supports located on a first branch of one of said at least two flexible members at a point upstream of said at least one driving wheel and for transferring the products to the supports located on a second branch of said one of said at least two flexible members downstream of said at least one driving wheel with respect to a direction of feed of the flexible members along the respective parallel paths, so that the products follow a trajectory that by-passes said at least one driving wheel,

wherein said at least two flexible members are continuous and extend along closed paths,

wherein each of said closed paths is defined by at least a first series and a second series of driving wheels with fixed axle, and by a first series and a second series of driving wheels with moving axle carried by a moving unit between the first series and the second series of driving wheels with fixed axle, and wherein a respective transfer member carried by said moving unit is associated with each of said driving wheels of said first series of driving wheels with moving axis, and

wherein each wheel of the first series of driving wheels with moving axle is coaxial to a corresponding wheel of the second series of driving wheels with moving axle.

39. (Previously Presented) Storage unit as claimed in claim 28, wherein said transfer member is adjustable in position in respect of the at least one driving wheel with which the transfer member is associated.

40. (Currently Amended) Storage unit as claimed in claim 28, wherein said supports comprise laminar components rigidly secured to ~~the corresponding one of said at least~~ two flexible member members.

41. (Currently Amended) ~~Storage unit as claimed in claim 40~~ A storage unit for storing elongated products comprising at least two flexible members, wherein each of said at least two flexible members are equipped with supports having at least one product supporting surface for said products, are constructed and arranged to extend and move along respective parallel paths and are defined by a plurality of driving wheels, wherein:

- said supports project laterally from each of said at least two flexible members; and

- in each of said paths in proximity to at least one driving wheel of said plurality of driving wheels a transfer



member is present for receiving said products from the supports located on a first branch of one of said at least two flexible members at a point upstream of said at least one driving wheel and for transferring the products to the supports located on a second branch of said one of said at least two flexible members downstream of said at least one driving wheel with respect to a direction of feed of the flexible members along the respective parallel paths, so that the products follow a trajectory that by-passes said at least one driving wheel,

wherein said supports comprise laminar components rigidly secured to the one of said at least two flexible members, and

wherein each of said supports has an end secured to the ~~corresponding one of said at least two flexible member members~~ and a portion forming ~~resting surfaces~~ said product supporting surface for said products, and is bent between said end and said ~~resting surfaces~~ product supporting surface to distance the ~~resting surfaces~~ product supporting surface from the plane on which the ~~corresponding one of said at least two flexible member members~~ lies.

42. (Previously Presented) Storage unit as claimed in claim 28, wherein said flexible members comprise chains.

43. (Previously Presented) Storage unit as claimed in claim 42, wherein each of said supports is rigidly secured to a respective link of the chains.

44. (Currently Amended) ~~Storage unit as claimed in claim 37~~ A storage unit for storing elongated products comprising at least two flexible members, wherein each of said at least two flexible members are equipped with supports having at least one product supporting surface for said products, are constructed and arranged to extend and move along respective parallel paths and are defined by a plurality of driving wheels, wherein:

- said supports project laterally from each of said at least two flexible members; and

- in each of said paths in proximity to at least one driving wheel of said plurality of driving wheels a transfer member is present for receiving said products from the supports located on a first branch of one of said at least two flexible members at a point upstream of said at least one driving wheel and for transferring the products to the supports located on a second branch of said one of said at least two flexible members downstream of said at least one driving wheel with respect to a direction of feed of the flexible members along the respective parallel paths, so

6468/USSN 10/520,895  
Group Art Unit 3651

that the products follow a trajectory that by-passes said at least one driving wheel,

wherein said at least two flexible members are continuous and extend along closed paths,

wherein each of said closed paths is defined by at least a first series and a second series of driving wheels with fixed axle, and by a first series and a second series of driving wheels with moving axle carried by a moving unit between the first series and the second series of driving wheels with fixed axle, and wherein a respective transfer member carried by said moving unit is associated with each of said driving wheels of said first series of driving wheels with moving axis,

wherein the supports are mounted projectingly on the one of said at least two flexible members so that in an area where the one of said at least two flexible members is driven around the driving wheels with moving axle the supports are oriented radially towards the moving axle of said driving wheels, and

wherein pairs of the driving wheels with moving axle coaxial with each other are supported by a single hub, mounted rotatingly on a shaft carried by said moving unit, and wherein said hub has, in an axially intermediate

position between one of the pairs of driving wheels supported on the single hub, an annular groove.

45. (Previously Presented) Storage unit as claimed in claim 35, wherein the driving wheels with moving axle have a larger radius than the driving wheels with fixed axle.

46. (Previously Presented) Storage unit as claimed in claim 28, wherein a section bar to guide and hold the products resting on said supports extends around at least some of said driving wheels.

47. (Previously Presented) Storage unit as claimed in claim 28, wherein said flexible members move along the respective parallel paths in a same direction, transferring the products from a loading station to an unloading station, the supports located along a portion of the paths between the loading station and the unloading station being loaded with said products, and the supports located along the paths from the unloading station to the loading station being empty.

48. (Currently Amended) ~~Storage unit as claimed in claim 28~~ A storage unit for storing elongated products comprising at least two flexible members, wherein each of said at least two flexible members are equipped with supports having at least one product supporting surface for

said products, are constructed and arranged to extend and move along respective parallel paths and are defined by a plurality of driving wheels, wherein:

- said supports project laterally from each of said at least two flexible members; and

- in each of said paths in proximity to at least one driving wheel of said plurality of driving wheels a transfer member is present for receiving said products from the supports located on a first branch of one of said at least two flexible members at a point upstream of said at least one driving wheel and for transferring the products to the supports located on a second branch of said one of said at least two flexible members downstream of said at least one driving wheel with respect to a direction of feed of the flexible members along the respective parallel paths, so that the products follow a trajectory that by-passes said at least one driving wheel, and

wherein at least one guiding sliding block is disposed between at least ~~two parallel branches~~ the first branch and the second branch of each of said flexible members in contact with said ~~two branches~~ first branch and said second branch.

49. (Currently Amended) Storage unit as claimed in claim 48, wherein said at least one guiding sliding block is disposed in a vicinity of one or more of the driving wheels, in contact with said ~~parallel branches~~ first branch and said second branch of the ~~corresponding~~ one of said at least two flexible ~~member~~ members.

50. (Currently Amended) Storage unit as claimed in claim 48, wherein said guiding sliding block has a width greater than a distance between said ~~two parallel branches~~ first branch and said second branch of the ~~corresponding~~ one of said at least two flexible ~~member~~ members, said ~~branches~~ first branch and said second branch being divaricated by said at least one guiding sliding block.

51. (Currently Amended) Storage unit as claimed in claim 48, wherein one of said at least one guiding sliding block is disposed at the driving wheels of said first series and said second series of driving wheels with fixed axle, in contact with the ~~two branches~~ first branch and the second branch of the ~~corresponding~~ one of said at least two flexible ~~member~~ members in contact with a respective driving wheel with fixed axle.

52. (Currently Amended) ~~Storage unit as claimed in claim 35~~ A storage unit for storing elongated products

comprising at least two flexible members, wherein each of said at least two flexible members are equipped with supports having at least one product supporting surface for said products, are constructed and arranged to extend and move along respective parallel paths and are defined by a plurality of driving wheels, wherein:

- said supports project laterally from each of said at least two flexible members; and

- in each of said paths in proximity to at least one driving wheel of said plurality of driving wheels a transfer member is present for receiving said products from the supports located on a first branch of one said at least two flexible members at a point upstream of said at least one driving wheel and for transferring the products to the supports located on a second branch of said one of said at least two flexible members downstream of said at least one driving wheel with respect to a direction of feed of the flexible members along the respective parallel paths, so that the products follow a trajectory that by-passes said at least one driving wheel,

wherein said at least two flexible members are continuous and extend along closed paths,

wherein each of said closed paths is defined by at least a first series and a second series of driving wheels with fixed axle, and by a first series and a second series of driving wheels with moving axle carried by a moving unit between the first series and the second series of driving wheels with fixed axle, and wherein a respective transfer member carried by said moving unit is associated with each of said driving wheels of said first series of driving wheels with moving axis, and

wherein said moving unit carries respective guiding sliding blocks disposed between parallel branches of a driving member between two adjacent driving wheels carried by said moving unit.

53. (Previously Presented) Storage unit as claimed in claim 48, wherein said at least one guiding sliding block has sides with bevels.

54. (Previously Presented) Storage unit as claimed in claim 53, wherein said sides have parallel rectilinear portions extending between said bevels.

55. (New) A storage unit for storing elongated products comprising at least two flexible members, wherein each of said at least two flexible members are equipped with supports having at least one product supporting surface for



6468/USSN 10/520,895  
Group Art Unit 3651

said products, are constructed and arranged to extend and move along respective parallel paths and are defined by a plurality of driving wheels, wherein:

- said supports project laterally from each of said at least two flexible members; and

- in each of said paths in proximity to at least one driving wheel of said plurality of driving wheels a transfer member is present for receiving said products from the supports located on a first branch of one of said at least two flexible members at a point upstream of said at least one driving wheel and for transferring the products to the supports located on a second branch of said one of said at least two flexible members downstream of said at least one driving wheel with respect to a direction of feed of the flexible members along the respective parallel paths, so that the products follow a trajectory that by-passes said at least one driving wheel,

wherein said at least two flexible members are continuous and extend along closed paths, and

wherein each of said supports has two opposed product supporting surfaces to receive and hold said products on one or other of two sides of each of said supports.

56. (New) A product storage unit comprising a flexible member provided with supports including product supporting surfaces, said supports projecting laterally from said flexible member, wherein said flexible member is arranged along a path including at least one guide wheel, around which said flexible member is guided, said path including a first branch upstream of said at least one guide wheel and a second branch downstream of said at least one guide wheel with respect to a moving direction of said flexible member along said path; at least one transfer member present in proximity to said at least one guide wheel, said transfer member including a transfer surface intersecting a trajectory of the supports carried by said first branch upstream of said at least one guide wheel and the second branch downstream of said at least one guide wheel, and inclined from a top thereof downwards and from the first branch upstream towards the second branch downstream to cause transfer of said products from the first branch upstream to the second branch downstream by gravity.

57. (New) Storage unit according to claim 56, wherein each of said supports has two opposed product supporting surfaces to receive and hold a product on one or other of said two surfaces of each of said supports.